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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MONTREAL 000266

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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SUBJECT: TRAFFICKING VIOLATIONS: SEX AND SMUGGLING IN QUEBEC

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: MONTREAL, SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS "THE PARIS OF THE WEST," HAS ALSO DEVELOPED A REPUTATION IN THE SEX-TOURISM INDUSTRY AS "THE BANGKOK OF THE WEST." NOT SURPRISINGLY, MOST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN QUEBEC PROVINCE INVOLVES WOMEN WHO ARE TRAFFICKED INTO THE SEX TRADE. IN FEBRUARY 2003, MONTREAL POLICE BROKE UP A JUVENILE PROSTITUTION RING IN WHICH MINOR GIRLS WERE BEING FORCED TO ENGAGE IN NUDE DANCING AND PROSTITUTION. MONTREAL POLICE CONTACTS REPORT THAT AFTER THEY STARTED TO CRACK DOWN ON PROSTITUTION AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS, MANY RINGS MOVED BUSINESS OUT OF MONTREAL TO QUEBEC CITY AND NIAGARA FALLS. IN ADDITION TO TRAFFICKING FOR THE SEX TRADE, U.S. AND CANADIAN IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS HAVE SEEN INCREASED SMUGGLING IN PERSONS--SOME OF WHICH CAN BE CONSIDERED TRAFFICKING--FROM COSTA RICA, MEXICO, CHINA, AND RUSSIA. LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN COMBATING ALL FORMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE PROVINCE. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) THE QUEBEC-BASED SEX TRADE. "LET YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKING," BELL'S YELLOW PAGES MOTTO HAS A DOUBLE ENTENDRE WHEN IT COMES TO THE 20 PAGES OF ADVERTISING FOR ESCORT AGENCIES IN THE 2003 PHONE BOOK. THESE ADS, UP FROM 17 PAGES IN 2002 AND 2 IN 1998, HIGHLIGHT WHAT A BIG BUSINESS THE SEX TRADE HAS BECOME IN QUEBEC. WHILE THE CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA PROHIBITS SOLICITING FOR THE PURPOSES OF PROSTITUTION, KEEPING A "BAWDY HOUSE" AND "PROCURING AND LIVING OFF THE INCOME OF PROSTITUTION," ESCORT AGENCIES ARE ABLE TO MANEUVER AROUND REGULATIONS. ASIDE FROM ESCORT AGENCIES, QUEBEC IS KNOWN FOR NUMEROUS STRIP CLUBS WHERE, UNLIKE IN THE UNITED STATES, CLIENTS CAN TOUCH THE DANCERS. MANY TRACE THE GROWING SEX INDUSTRY IN QUEBEC TO A 1999 CANADIAN SUPREME COURT DECISION THAT LEGALIZED "CONTACT DANCING," WHEREBY CUSTOMERS IN STRIP CLUBS ARE ALLOWED TO TOUCH THE BREASTS, BUTTOCKS, AND THIGHS OF THE DANCERS. ACCORDING TO A 2002 ARTICLE IN THE GAZETTE, THESE LAP DANCES, OR PRIVATE CUBICLE ENCOUNTERS, SELL FOR AROUND \$10 A PIECE AND BRING IN ABOUT 50% MORE REVENUES FOR CLUBS THAN THEY EARNED BEFORE THE 1999 LEGISLATION.

3. (SBU) A PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS. WHILE MANY OF THE WOMEN WHO WORK FOR STRIP CLUBS AND ESCORT AGENCIES DO SO WILLINGLY, INVESTIGATIONS AND ARRESTS OVER THE PAST YEAR HAVE UNCOVERED HUNDREDS WHO ARE COERCED INTO THE BUSINESS. WHEN ASKED FOR A PROFILE OF THE GIRLS HE ENCOUNTERS, A MONTREAL POLICE INVESTIGATOR THAT POST INTERVIEWED DESCRIBED THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO. VULNERABLE RUNAWAY GIRLS, MANY OF WHOM ARE MINORS, MEET MEN WHO OFFER THEM FOOD AND SHELTER. THEN, IT IS "PAYBACK TIME." THE MEN REQUEST THAT THE GIRLS BECOME DANCERS IN STRIP CLUBS. IF THE GIRLS PROTEST, THEY ARE TOLD THAT THEY OWE THE MEN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS FOR THE INVESTMENT THEY HAVE MADE BY TAKING CARE OF THEM. THE CARETAKERS THEN ACQUIRE FALSE IDENTITY CARDS FOR THE GIRLS TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE OVER 18 AND SET THEM UP IN BARS AND CLUBS THROUGHOUT QUEBEC AND IN NIAGARA FALLS. ONE GIRL REPORTED THAT SHE EARNED \$300-\$400 A DAY, BUT WAS ONLY GIVEN \$25-\$50 OF HER EARNINGS. THIS SCENARIO MATCHES THAT OF THE JUVENILE PROSTITUTION RING BROKEN UP BY MONTREAL POLICE IN FEBRUARY 2003. THE GAZETTE REPORTED THAT THE TWO RINGLEADERS WOULD BEGIN BY DATING THE GIRLS AND BECOMING THEIR LOVERS, AND THEN FORCE THEM TO STRIP IN BARS IN MONTREAL AND TORONTO. WHEN DANCING DID NOT GENERATE ENOUGH REVENUES, THE GIRLS WERE PUSHED INTO PROSTITUTION.

4. (SBU) POST'S POLICE CONTACT REPORTED THAT MOST OF THE GIRLS HE ENCOUNTERS ARE CANADIAN. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO OTHER POST CONTACTS, THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW CASES OVER THE PAST YEAR IN WHICH FOREIGN WOMEN AND GIRLS WERE TRAFFICKED TO QUEBEC FOR THE SEX TRADE. IN ONE CASE, TWO RUSSIAN WOMEN WERE BROUGHT TO CANADA FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF NUDE DANCING AND PROSTITUTION. IN ANOTHER CASE, AN INDIAN WOMAN TRAFFICKED TWO MINORS INTO CANADA FOR PROSTITUTION. ACCORDING TO A CANADIAN IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL, THE WOMAN WAS APPREHENDED AND SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IN PRISON BEFORE BEING DEPORTED TO INDIA.

5. (SBU) WHO ARE THE RINGLEADERS? MOTORCYCLE GANGS ARE THE KINGPINS BEHIND PROSTITUTION, STRIP CLUBS, AND ESCORT AGENCIES IN QUEBEC. ACCORDING TO THE CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE CANADA 2002 REPORT, THE HELLS ANGELS ARE THE LARGEST AND MOST CRIMINALLY ACTIVE OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANG IN CANADA WITH 35 FULL CHAPTERS. IN ORDER TO HAVE GIRLS PLACED IN CLUBS AND AGENCIES, OTHER HAITIAN, ASIAN, AND RUSSIAN GANG MEMBERS TEND TO USE THE MOTORCYCLE GANGS AS MIDDLEMEN. WITH

INCREASED POLICE ATTENTION ON THE MONTREAL SCENE (WITHIN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, MONTREAL POLICE HAVE SET UP A TASK FORCE ON JUVENILE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION), THESE GANGS ARE EXPANDING INTO MARKETS IN QUEBEC CITY, OTTAWA, AND TORONTO. IN 2002-2003, POLICE HAVE SEEN A RAMPANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF GIRLS BEING SENT FROM QUEBEC TO WORK AS STRIPPERS AND PROSTITUTES IN NIAGARA FALLS. THE HANDLERS TAKE LARGE CUTS OF THE GIRLS' EARNINGS, MAKING IT A VERY LUCRATIVE BUSINESS. IN QUEBEC CITY, THERE HAVE EVEN BEEN CONFIRMED CASES IN WHICH GIRLS HAVE BEEN SOLD FROM ONE HANDLER TO ANOTHER.

16. (SBU) PROTECTION EFFORTS. ON JULY 28, 2002, CANADA AMENDED THE CRIMINAL CODE AND THE CANADA EVIDENCE ACT TO ENHANCE THE PROTECTION OF MINORS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION. THE LEGISLATION IS ONE STEP IN SATISFYING CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO THE JANUARY 2002 UN PROTOCOL ON THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN. AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL, THERE ARE SEVERAL SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES, FUNDED BY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SOURCES, THAT OFFER PROTECTION TO YOUNG WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE SEX TRADE. ONE ORGANIZATION IN MONTREAL, "PASSAGES" IS A SHELTER FOR 18- TO 30-YEAR OLD WOMEN. MANY OF THE WOMEN WHO COME TO THE SHELTER ARE INVOLVED IN DRUGS AND PROSTITUTION. HOWEVER, A PASSAGES EMPLOYEE STATED THAT SHE RARELY SEES THE YOUNG WOMEN INVOLVED IN SEX TRAFFICKING RINGS; SHE SPECULATED THAT THE HANDLERS OF THESE WOMEN MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITIES CLOSELY AND PREVENT THEM FROM ACCESSING AVAILABLE SOCIAL SERVICES. IN THE OPINION OF POST'S POLICE CONTACT, ONCE GIRLS ARE BROUGHT INTO A TRAFFICKING RING, THEY FACE A SLIPPERY SLOPE. VULNERABLE GIRLS, DRAWN TO OFFERS OF PROTECTION AND CARE, OFTEN THINK THEY ARE IN LOVE WITH THEIR "PROTECTOR." COERCED INTO NUDE DANCING, THEN PROSTITUTION, THE GIRLS QUICKLY BECOME PART OF A SEAMY WORLD IN WHICH DRUG USE AND ADDICTION IS PREVALENT. NEEDING INCOME TO SUPPORT THEIR DRUG HABITS, MANY GIRLS FIND IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO BREAK OUT OF THE SEX TRADE.

17. (SBU) SMUGGLING. IN 2002-2003, U.S. AND CANADIAN IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO SEEN CASES OF SMUGGLING TO AND THROUGH CANADA, SOME OF WHICH MAY BE CLASSIFIED AS "TRAFFICKING." MEXICANS, COSTA RICANS, CHINESE, AND RUSSIANS HAVE BEEN THE MAIN ORGANIZERS. IN 2002-2003, NUMEROUS MEXICANS FILED CLAIMS FOR REFUGEE STATUS IN CANADA AFTER HAVING BEEN SMUGGLED ONTO FLIGHTS TO MONTREAL. TO DATE, THE ORGANIZERS BEHIND THIS RING HAVE NOT BEEN APPREHENDED. IN ANOTHER CONTINUING CASE, VARIOUS GROUPS OF COSTA RICANS HAVE BEEN TRAVELING TO CANADA ON FALSIFIED CANADIAN VISAS. AFTER ARRIVING IN CANADA, THEY PROCEED TO A SECLUDED PART OF THE U.S.-CANADA BORDER AND FLEE TO THE U.S. SIDE. THIS OPERATION HAD BECOME SO ORGANIZED THAT SOME OF THE GROUPS WERE MET AT THE AIRPORT BY TOUR BUSES WHICH DROVE THEM TO THE BORDER. WHILE THE ROYAL MOUNTED CANADIAN POLICE RECENTLY ARRESTED THE KINGPIN OF THIS OPERATION, INTELLIGENCE REPORTS WARN OF AN ONGOING BATTLE WITH COSTA RICAN SMUGGLING. IN OTHER INSTANCES, IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS APPREHENDED NUMEROUS CHINESE CITIZENS TRAVELING AS IMPOSTERS ON JAPANESE PASSPORTS. EACH PERSON REPORTEDLY PAID UP TO \$30,000 FOR HIS/HER FAKE PASSPORT. OFTEN TO GUARANTEE FULL PAYMENT, THE ORGANIZERS WOULD HOLD THE CUSTOMERS' FAMILIES HOSTAGE IN CHINA OR SUBJECT THEM TO FORCED LABOR. FINALLY, A CASE THAT IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION INVOLVES A RUSSIAN DUO SUSPECTED OF SMUGGLING ALIENS OF VARIOUS NATIONALITIES FROM CANADA TO THE UNITED STATES BY HIDING THEM INSIDE A TRACTOR TRAILER TRUCK. THE DUO CHARGES EACH FOREIGN NATIONAL \$3,000 AND TRANSPORTS 3-10 PEOPLE TO THE UNITED STATES ON EACH TRIP. IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS ARE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THESE MEN.

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